

"The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken. The earth staggers like a drunk man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again!" (Isaiah 24:19-20)

Remember last week's lesson concerning Tyre, the jubilant and materialistically-oriented, maritime city on the Mediterranean Sea which flourished for many years as the center of world commerce--until God took it down because of its pride! Using the Assyrians and the Babylonians and, finally, Alexander the Great to destroy its stronghold and humble its spirit! Causing great wailing and despair for all the inhabitants of the coastlands who depended on it for their economic well-being. And yet Isaiah prophesied that after 70 years of "silence," the Lord would visit Tyre and her prosperity would return--and, even more significantly, that "one day" (seemingly referring to the time of the future millennial reign of Christ) Tyre would actually "set apart her gains to the Lord," and be restored in a relationship with Israel, and the God of Israel! Demonstrating again God's sovereign plan for the ages, to transform the hearts of man and cause Gentile nations to come to Mount Zion and join the children of Israel in worshiping and glorifying Him!

And that completed our study of a series of chapters (13-23) concerning the various nations surrounding Israel, bringing us to Isaiah 24, and a new series of chapters (24-27)--where Isaiah sees "the day" when God's judgment will be poured out on the whole world! The "day of the Lord," beginning with a 7-year period of time known as "The Tribulation," described further in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 and Revelation 6-19--and ending, as we understand Scripture, with the return of Christ to set up His millennial kingdom on the earth!

These chapters are also seen by some as "Isaiah's Apocalypse," since it reveals cataclysmic upheavals and the culmination of world history as we know it! (Interestingly, "apocalypse" is the Greek name for the book of Revelation--and the book of the Revelation is an expansion of what we see happening in Isaiah 24-27!)

Isaiah 24 begins by describing what the world will be like on "that day"! A world "laid waste and devastated," with its "surface distorted" and its inhabitants (regardless of their status or class) "scattered"! A world "polluted" by these same inhabitants, because they "transgressed (God's) laws, violated (His) statutes, and broke the everlasting covenant!" (Motyer notes that "it's intrinsic to the doctrine of creation that human beings in sin are the supreme environmental threat" to this world!) "Therefore a curse devours the earth and those who live in it are held guilty...and diminished in number!"

Isaiah describes the effect on the people in grim and picturesque ways:

"All the merry-hearted sigh!"

"The gaiety of the tambourines ceases!"

"The noise of the revelers stops!"

"The wine turns bitter!"

"All joy turns to gloom!"

"Desolation is left in the city!"

Motyer sums it up! "Their way of life ceases to bring them any satisfaction and everything is meaningless!"

But then, in contrast, Isaiah shifts gears again (as he is prone to do!), and hears other people (a "godly remnant," it turns out)--"in the coastlands of the sea, and from the ends of the earth...raising their voices and singing and shouting for joy concerning the majesty of the Lord"! Wow! (Grogan writes: "One feature of chapters 24-27 that reminds the reader of the Book of Revelation is the way declarations of coming judgment are interspersed with songs of thanksgiving!")

Motyer notes the contrast between the "stilling of the song of the world" (in verses 7-12) with the "rising song of the remnant...in a collapsing world where their joy in the Lord is sustaining (in verses 13-16)! Wow!

These are the "tribulation saints"! Revelation 7 tells us that despite the devastating days of the Tribulation, many people will be saved during that time! In fact, it will be an unprecedented time of redemption, as 144,000 evangelists (12,000 each from the twelve tribes of Israel)--saved, sealed, and secured--will go out into the world and lead many (both Jews and Gentiles) to the Lord! "A multitude which no one could number who will stand before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9)

And so we see their presence made known (beginning in verse 14 of Isaiah 24), as they prepare for their great pilgrimage to Zion to honor and glorify the Lord of hosts (in verse 23)! (Micah 4:1-4 says, "...It will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established...It will be raised above the hills, and the people will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, 'Come and let us to up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of Jacob...that we may walk in His paths...!)

But, interestingly, verse 16 indicates Isaiah can't bring himself to appreciate it all yet! Apparently because of a "heavy heart" (again characteristic of Isaiah) as he foresees devastation coming (pictured in verses 17-20), with:

People "fleeing the reports of disaster...and "falling into the pit"!

The "windows above opening," and the "foundations of the earth shaking...and breaking asunder"!

The earth "reeling to and fro...tottering like a shack...and falling, never to rise again"!

Reminding us perhaps of the collapse of the World Trade Building not so long ago and the terror which just took place in Turkey and Syria! And so, not too hard for us to imagine any more how this could be replicated in the days to come, as God continues to execute His plan for the ages!

"So it will happen in that day..." that God's judgement will include "heaven on high"! Reminding us of Ephesians 6:12 where it tells us that "...our struggle is not (only?) against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places...!"

And "so it will happen...that the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem"!

Did you happen to notice how this passage in Isaiah 24 connects with, contrast with, even pictures, the accounts of creation, and the flood, and tower of Babel, in Genesis?

God reversing what He did in the creation story--turning the "void" and "darkness" into "order" and "light" (as opposed to turning order and light into "chaos" and "darkness" in Isaiah 24)

Noting Jesus' words in Matthew 24:37-42) how the "coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah...before the flood"!

How God will "scatter the inhabitants of the earth" in the coming days, just like He did at Babel!

And how "the glory of God and the Lamb" will replace the sun and the moon, which He created for us in Genesis (and which will no longer be needed) when He reigns on Zion!

We can know for sure that it's all going to happen! Because, as Isaiah said, in Isaiah 24:3, "For the Lord has spoken this word!"

Aren't you glad that we have the Word of God to reveal Himself, and to guide us in all things?

"I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand I will not be shaken"! (Psalm 17:8)

Lowell